

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE MEDIA PROTOCOLS

What are “Media Protocols?”

A set of standard procedures by which all employees of the Department are expected to handle calls or direct contacts from the media.

Why Do We Have Them?

Because maintaining a positive and productive relationship with the news media is a vital part of the economic development mission of the Department of Commerce. Media protocols are particularly important because:

- They ensure a timely response and quality service for reporters on deadlines.
- They ensure that reporters get accurate, consistent responses from the Department.
- They ensure that the most informed sources communicate with the media.
- They ensure a single, central point of contact for the media that can work across divisional lines and coordinate interviews and requests for reporters.

The Department also at times possesses confidential information of private businesses. Care must be taken to provide as much information as practical to reporters, while at the same time protecting legitimate confidentiality interests of businesses considering relocation, expansion and job creation in North Carolina.

Basic Procedures for Handling Media Calls

If you receive a call from or are approached by the media, always do the following:

- a. **Be polite and respectful.** Reporters have a difficult job and are often on deadline.
- b. **Inform the reporter he or she needs to check in with the Public Affairs Office** first before you assist or answer. That means he or she should call:
 - i. Deborah Barnes 733-5082 (o) 218-0466 (c)
 - ii. Greg Thomas 733-3438 (o) 218-9675 (c)
 - iii. Joyce Philpot 733-7651 (o)
 - iv. Don Hobart 733-3448 (o) 880-1133 (c)
- c. **Explain that you can’t comment or discuss the story until:**
 - i. The reporter has first spoken with the Public Affairs Office, *and*
 - ii. The Public Affairs Office has gotten back in touch with you and asked you to speak with the reporter.
- d. **Don’t comment on or discuss the story** until you have been contacted by the Public Affairs staff.
- e. **Immediately notify the Public Affairs Office of the call** and tell them:
 - i. The reporter’s name, news agency and telephone numbers and/or email addresses.
 - ii. The nature of the story the reporter is working on and any information he or she needs.
 - iii. Any important background information that Public Affairs staff needs to know.

Note: *If a reporter calls, simply sending an email to the Public Affairs staff is not a sufficient communication. It’s a good idea, but it should always be accompanied by a telephone call that reaches a live person – and not simply voicemail. Because reporters are on deadline, it is important the Public Affairs staff learn of their interest at the earliest opportunity.*

Handling Calls from Political Groups

If you are contacted in connection with your work by someone representing a political group working on a study, report, lawsuit, or article, you should notify the Public Affairs Office or General Counsel and defer comment until you have discussed the matter and understand the context of the request.